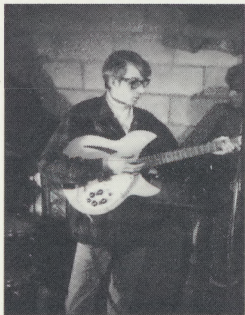
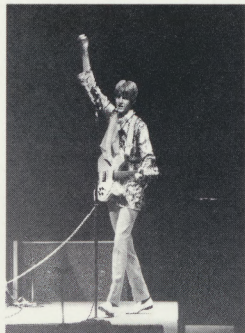
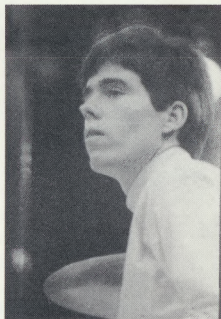


**biff!  
bang!**

# powder

also featuring  
**ray columbus**  
the art collection  
**thomas &  
richard frost**



authentic 1960s recordings by northern california's legendary powerpop outfit

1. TURN ANOTHER PAGE
2. GLADLY
3. DO I LOVE YOU
4. MAGICAL JACK
5. I TRY
6. RUBY RED LIPS
7. RODEO
8. GRIMBLEY LEITCH
9. HATE TO SEE HER GO
10. WHAT THE PEOPLE SAID
11. FLOWERS
12. LET'S LOOK AT THE MOON
13. TOO MANY MILES
14. TURN ANOTHER PAGE (Gold Star version)
15. GRIMBLEY LEITCH (alternate vocal)
16. MAGICAL JACK (backing track)
17. KICK ME
18. SNAP CRACKLE & POP
19. I GO TO SCHOOL
20. SO SAD ABOUT US
21. MORNING
22. SHE'S MY GIRL
23. MILLICENT
24. BLUEY BLUES BLUE
25. IT'S SO SIMPLE
26. WOULD YOU LAUGH
27. GYPSY GIRL

"Radio-friendly Anglophilia doesn't get much better than this. In any decade . . ."  
Rolling Stone



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POWDER

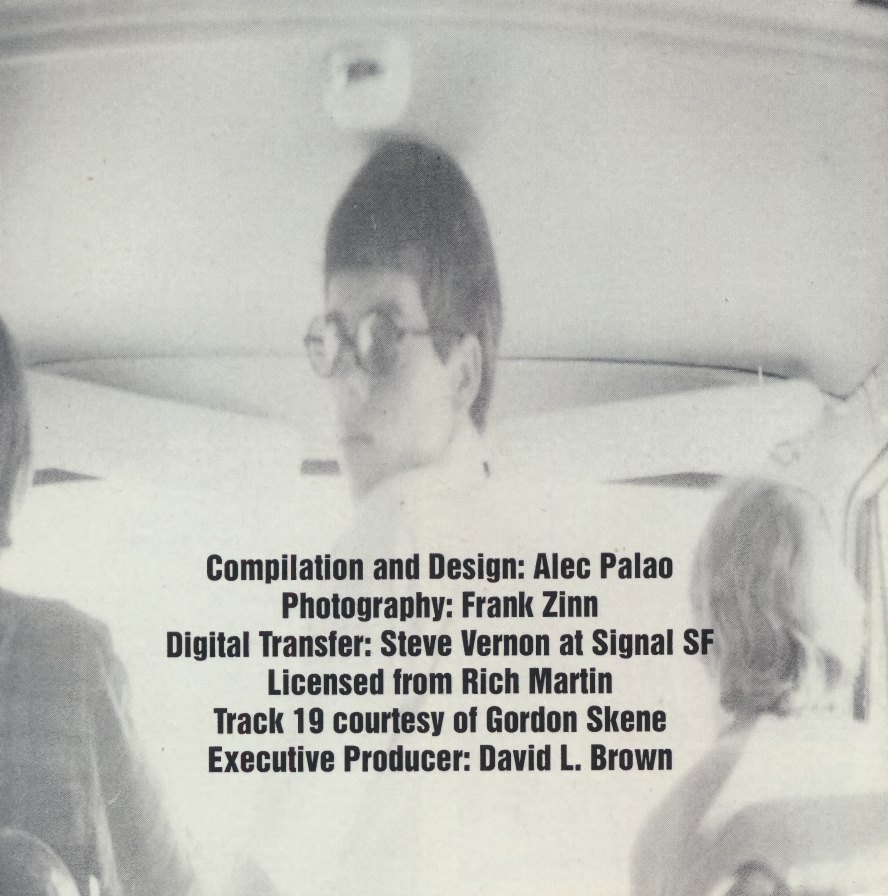
biff! bang! powder

DR 1015

POWDER

biff! bang! powder

DR 1015



**Compilation and Design: Alec Palao**  
**Photography: Frank Zinn**  
**Digital Transfer: Steve Vernon at Signal SF**  
**Licensed from Rich Martin**  
**Track 19 courtesy of Gordon Skene**  
**Executive Producer: David L. Brown**

## POWDER

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16. MAGICAL JACK (backing track)

## RAY COLUMBUS & THE ART COLLECTION

17. KICK ME (Columbus)
18. SNAP CRACKLE & POP (Columbus)

## THE ART COLLECTION

19. I GO TO SCHOOL
20. SO SAD ABOUT US (Townshend)
21. MORNING (Martin-Arbulich)
22. SHE'S MY GIRL
23. MILLICENT

## THOMAS & RICHARD FROST

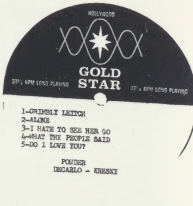
24. BLUEY BLUES BLUE
25. IT'S SO SIMPLE
26. WOULD YOU LAUGH
27. GYPSY GIRL

All songs by Rich & Tom Martin except as indicated.

All songs published by Chris-Marc & Cotillion (BMI) except  
Tracks 2, 24-27 Tons Of Fun (ASCAP)  
Tracks 17-19, 21-23 Cotop (BMI)  
Track 20 Essex (ASCAP)

**RICH MARTIN:** guitar, vocals  
**TOM MARTIN:** bass, guitar, vocals  
**BILL SCHOPPE:** drums (1-16)  
**RAY COLUMBUS:** lead vocal (17-18)  
**SCOTT ARBULICH:** bass, vocals (17-23)  
**STEVE CHRIEST:** drums (17)  
**STEVE MURDOCH:** drums (18-23)

Track 17: Westmont, San Jose 1-7-67  
*Produced by Ray Columbus*  
Tracks 18, 20, 23: Westmont, San Jose 1-16-67  
*Produced by Ray Columbus*  
Tracks 21-22: Westmont, San Jose 3-8-67  
*Produced by Ray Columbus*  
Track 19: Gold Star, Hollywood 7-20-67  
*Produced by Charlie Greene & Brian Stone*  
Tracks 1-3 Westmont, San Jose Spring 1968  
*Produced by Rich & Tom Martin*  
Tracks 4-16 Gold Star Hollywood Fall 1968  
*Produced by Denis Pregnotato*  
Tracks 24-27 Westmont, San Jose Spring 1969  
*Produced by Rich & Tom Martin*



**IF YOU'D** checked out most high schools or teen clubs across the United States in the years 1965 to 1967, it's more than likely you would have found a few self-styled 'mods'. A breed apart from the average Beatles or Stones-besotted teen, and bearing little relation to the generalized Americanism of 'mod' as anything post-1965 that wasn't crew cutted and plaid shirted, these mods knew all about the cool, obscure English bands like the Small Faces or the Pretty Things. Their hair was long but neat, and they dressed in stylishly outlandish duds. And of course, some, if not all, of them were in bands. In Miami, Florida there were the Montells,

aka H.M Subjects, in Cleveland, Ohio the legendary Choir, later to metamorphose into the Raspberries, and who in fact initially called themselves the Mods, one of doubtless hundreds of such combos across the country to do so.

And in San Mateo, on the San Francisco peninsula, it was Rich Martin and his brother Tom who were the local Anglophiles. While they weren't mods per se, Rich and Tom read the British mags like *Rave*, dressed in dandified threads brought directly from Carnaby Street by their pal Bernie Smith (who was the son of a Pan Am pilot and could afford to jet over to Blighty whenever he chose), and dug the latest hip UK sounds on import-only singles and albums ordered through the mail. And of course, they led their own band, the Art Collection, who played obscure Who B-sides or Hollies album tracks, and were forever being asked by fans whether or not they were from England.

All this was part of a musical infatuation that had started, naturally enough, with the Beatles; and which would ultimately lead to the remarkable sounds on this compact disc. Prior to the British Invasion, the brothers had been playing guitar (Rich lead, Tom rhythm) in a locally popular surf and r&b group, the Impressions. There were two years of frat jobs and Y-dances, and it was a lot of fun; but when the other members of the group refused to grow their hair long, Rich and Tom took control of the combo, and pointed its sound in a firmly Anglophilic direction. For a while the group were known as the New Impressions; by 1965 they had become the Newcastle Five, with the addition of Bob Miller (bass), Bill Schoppe (drums) and Don Varet (vocals). The band gigged regularly at the proliferating number of peninsula and South Bay teen centers like the Cinnamon Tree in San Carlos, the Continental Roller Rink in Santa Clara and the Bold Knight in Sunnyvale. Towards the end of the year Don Varet left, and the Five included in their ranks, for a short spell, future white r&b belter Lydia Pense. Further personnel changes impeded progress, but by the middle of 1966 the line-up had solidified, with Rich on lead guitar, Tom on rhythm, Steve Chriest on drums and Scott Arbulich on bass and lead vocals.

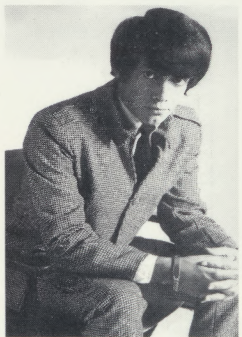
It was this group that visiting New Zealand pop star

Ray Columbus selected as his backing band in late 1966. After a whirlwind two years as one of the top rock acts in Australasia, Columbus moved to the West Coast in an attempt to break it big. Sensing Los Angeles was a little too competitive, the singer settled in San Jose; unfortunately his slick act, so popular downunder, failed miserably when performed alongside the punky raunch of local heroes like the Chocolate Watchband and the Mourning Reign, or the new bohemianism of the Jefferson Airplane. Nevertheless, the band, christened the Art Collection by Ray, got to play with the Animals and the Turtles, and they also backed him on the killer 'Kick Me'. While that single is a fuzz punk classic, on stage Ray would insist on playing corny tunes like 'Winchester Cathedral', complete with megaphone. The previously unreleased 'Snap Crackle & Pop' was intended as the follow-up to 'Kick Me', but was shelved in favour of a Colstar reissue of Ray's big NZ weepie 'I Need You'.

In the Art Collection's own set, Rich was experimenting with feedback and other guitar pyrotechnics, inspired by the violent sound of Who and Small Faces records. As far as cover tunes went, the band ran the gamut of Anglo obscurity, from the Pink Floyd's 'Take Up Thy Stethoscope And Walk' (complete with faked smash up routine), to 'Bang' and 'Hideaway', from Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich's *If Music Be The Food Of Love*... *Prepare For Indigestion* album. Rich was even conversant with totally unknown (in the US) outfits like A Band Of Angels or Pinkerton's Assorted Colours. More importantly, he'd been writing originals in a similar vein, pairing solid melodies with powerpacked arrangements.

The Art Collection recorded some of these during the spring, at a couple of Ray-produced sessions, held at Dick Quick's Westmont Studios in San Jose. Scott sang lead on 'She's My Girl' and 'Morning', two tunes that actually owe more to the highly commercial sound of groups like the Turtles. However, the Carnaby-flavoured 'Millicent', a splendid number featuring Rich's first lead vocal, pointed to what was to come. The band also laid down their Americanized arrangement of 'So Sad About Us', though never got around to finishing it off (thus it appears here minus a guitar break).

Columbus split from the Art Collection in mid-1967,



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: *live at Donovan's Reef, San Francisco March 1967*; *Ray Columbus 1966*; *Ray & The Art Collection early 1967 (l-r Rich, Steve Chriest, Ray, Scott, Tom)*; *backstage at SF Civic March 1967 (l-r Scott, Steve Murdoch, Rich, Tom)*; *the Art Collection live at Willow Glen High, San Jose, September 1967*



returning to New Zealand less than a year later. The band continued to play locally, but the teen audience had become enamored of the San Francisco sound, and the Art Collection's English repertoire and auto-destruct stage antics only served to confuse kids who'd begun digging the Dead or Quicksilver. In a bold move, the band (now with Steve Murdoch on drums) moved wholesale down to Los Angeles, and plied their wares on the Strip at the Hullabaloo and the Galaxy, rubbing shoulders with the Youngbloods and the Buffalo Springfield.

Being 'out of towners' gave the Art Collection a modicum of notoriety, which enabled them to headline over struggling local groups like the Iron Butterfly. A Monday night's residency at the Galaxy was caught by Denis Pregolato, manager of Sonny and Cher. Impressed by what he saw, and hyped on the band by their friend Rodney Bingenheimer, Pregolato rushed up to Beverly Hills to collect Sonny and have him check the group out. Before the Art Collection knew it, they were preparing to embark on a cross-country tour, providing backing for the Sonny and Cher show. Ironically, the group had earlier failed an audition for Sonny & Cher's erstwhile producers Greene & Stone. From that aborted session comes 'I Go To School', another marvelous art-pop opus.

As with Ray Columbus, the group were allowed their own, opening set, and initially everything went well. However, after the first show at the Circle Star Theater in San Carlos, there was a personnel shuffle, and Scott and Steve left. Scott's departure was especially hard, as he was an old friend and had handled lead vocals up until that point, but his mature voice had always seemed a little out of place on the English-accented material Rich was developing. Rather than replace Scott, Tom switched to bass (which he mastered with a consummate ease), and drummer Bill Schoppe came back into the fold. Schoppe's disciplined, hard hitting style was perfect for the power trio the group had become. It wasn't long before the constant one-nighters tightened the outfit into one powerhouse unit.

In early 1968, the trio returned to the Bay Area during a break in touring to work up some original material, rehearsing in a disused office block in San Bruno. By this point, they had renamed themselves Powder, as in *gunpowder*, a suitable enough synonym, judging by the

explosive sounds they put down in a three song demo session, again at Westmont. 'Turn Another Page', 'Do I Love You?' and the immense 'Gladly' are all dripping with Swinging London mod-pop references, yet they possess a charm and not inconsiderable power that are Powder's own. Rich used a hollow bodied Barney Kessel to coax some superlative feedback from his Vox Super Beatle amp (he'd previously used a Rickenbacker, but the screeching treble tended to drive away the audience), whilst Bill's taut, inventive drumming fills the rest of the space. With the addition of Rich and Tom's harmonies, the end result is spectacular, and quite remarkable when the time and place of recording are considered. Most of Rich and Tom's contemporaries in the Bay Area had forsaken the English sound and were dabbling in Bluesbreakers/Cream-styled blues rock, or aping the then popular Moby Grape and Grateful Dead. Only the Druids, based in Palo Alto with a predilection for Move covers, were operating in anything like the same area as Powder.

Sonny Bono and Denis Pagnolato were quick to realize the unusual nature of the group, and upon hearing the demo quickly signed them to their joint Progress Production Company. The plan was for the combo to make an album, which would be licensed to a major label, probably Atco, for whom Sonny and Cher were still recording. Powder opted to work at Gold Star studios in Hollywood, not because of its legendary Spector connection, but rather because it was where the Who had taped 'I Can See For Miles'. Unfortunately, it was the worst choice the group could have made, because engineer Doc Siegel was totally unsympathetic towards the feedback-strewn nature of their sound. Principally, he made Rich turn right down in the studio, which as any guitarist knows, is the kiss of death for the communication of force and power in the music. Pagnolato's supervision of the sessions didn't help either; the producer insisted upon adding ill fitting effects, like crowd noise on the chorus of 'Turn Another Page', which made it sound like an East End pub singalong.

It is these sessions that make up the bulk of this album, and while the results were unsatisfactory to the band, there are some strong performances that the poor production can't hide. Principally, 'Magical Jack', 'Rodeo', 'I Try' and 'Grimbley Leitch' possess an unbridled energy and sense of fun. The latter song was a tongue in cheek tribute to



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Powder back Sonny & Cher at a fundraiser for Bobby Kennedy in Bakersfield, 1968; the incomparable Bill Schoppe; Rich ponders his future as a powerpop hero.



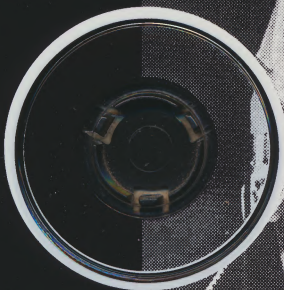
Ray Columbus; the line about bagpipes refers to 'I Would Rather Blow A Bagpipe', the Kiwi singer's poor attempt at a novelty hit. And the gunshot in 'Rodeo' was lifted from 'Western Movies' by the Olympics. The overriding Who influence is obvious on cuts like 'Ruby Red Lips', but elsewhere touches of Love ('What The People Said') or Simon & Garfunkel ('Too Many Miles') are apparent.

Cut at the same sessions, although not intended for the projected album, was the melancholy 'Flowers'. Earmarked for the soundtrack of Sonny and Cher's 'message' movie *Chastity*, the song was to eventually lead to a parting of the ways. As per most music industry deals in those days, Progress requested the publishing rights to all Powder's tunes, provoking a rift between the band and the company. The album was shelved, 'Flowers' appeared on the soundtrack with Pagnolato's voice dubbed over Rich's, and Powder retreated back to San Mateo to lick their wounds. What had seemed like a lucky break ended up another music biz tale of disillusion and frustration. While they had appeared with Sonny and Cher frequently, Powder never even got to perform in public by themselves.

Back home in the Bay Area, Rich and Tom hibernated for a while, penning folkier, more introspective material (some demos of which are included here), and laying the intensity of Powder to rest. The following year would provide the brothers with a closer brush with fame, when their highly commercial 'She's Got Love' record - released under the imprimatur of Thomas And Richard Frost - became a minor hit; however, further singles and two albums (another one unreleased) could not consolidate its success.

The contents of *this* collection, though, are something they can be proud of. It's tempting to think of Powder and the Art Collection as 'missing link' kind of bands. Certainly, there were few American groups back in the late sixties capable of this kind of noise. Had the Powder album been issued at the time, it'd surely rank as an expensive collector's item today. That's no guarantee of good music of course, but I doubt any fan of late sixties pop will be disappointed by what they hear. There's a spark and an excitement that'll put a grin on your face immediately. Try it and see.

**biff!  
bang!  
powder**



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(for track details see  
inlay card or booklet)

**DR 1015**

